



Department of State

TELEGRAM

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ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

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R 220932Z JUN 76
FM AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3755
INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
AMEMBASSY CANBERRA
AMEMBASSY JAKARTA
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AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE
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CINCPAC

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, PGOV, MY

SUBJECT: SNAP, BERJAYA AND USNO JOIN NATIONAL FRONT; USNO NOT TO
CONTEST SABAY BY-ELECTIONS

REF: (A) KUALA LUMPUR 2680 DTG 110350Z MAY 76 (NOTAL)
(B) KUALA LUMPUR 3239 (NOTAL)
(C) KUALA LUMPUR 3421 (NOTAL)

1. SUMMARY: NATIONAL FRONT SUPREME/COUNCIL ACTS FAVORABLY ON
MEMBERSHIP
APPLICATIONS OF SNAP, USNO AND BERJAYA PARTY. USNO AGREES NOT TO
CONTEST FORTHCOMING BY-ELECTIONS IN SABAH NATIONAL FRONT PARTIES NOW
CONTROL ALL STATE LEGISLATURES AND 144 OF THE 154 SEATS IN PARLIAMENT
END SUMMARY.

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2. THE SUPREME COUNCIL OF THE RULING NATIONAL FRONT (NF) COALITION MET IN KUALA LUMPUR EVENING OF JUNE 21 TO ACT ON PENDING MEMBERSHIP APPLICATIONS BY SARAWAK NATIONAL PARTY (SNAP), AND THE TWO MAIN POLITICAL PARTIES IN SABAH, THE UNITED SABAH NATIONAL ORGANIZATION (USNO) AND THE BERJAYA PARTY. PREVIOUSLY, NF SECRETARY GENERAL GHAFAR BABA HAD INDICATED THAT ALL THREE PARTIES' MEMBERSHIP APPLICATIONS HAD BEEN ACCEPTED "IN PRINCIPLE." FOLLOWING MEETING, IT WAS ANNOUNCED THAT: (A) THE THREE HAD BEEN ADMITTED FORMALLY TO NF; (B) USNO HAD AGREED NOT RPT NOT TO COMPETE IN THE SABAH ASSEMBLY BY-ELECTIONS TO FILL VACANCIES CAUSED BY DEATHS OF FIVE BERJAYA ASSEMBLYMEN IN JUNE 6 PLANE CRASH (REFS B AND C); AND (C) AGREEMENT HAD BEEN REACHED "IN PRINCIPLE" ON SNAP PARTICIPATION IN THE SARAWAK COALITION GOVERNMENT WHICH CURRENTLY COMPRISES THE SARAWAK UNITED PEOPLE'S PARTY (SUPP) AND THE PARTY PESAKA BUMIPUTRA (PPB). THE PARTY BREAKDOWN IN THE COUNCIL NEGERI--THE SARAWAK STATE LEGISLATIVE BODY--IS: SNAP--18; PPB-18; AND SUPP--12; THUS THERE WILL NO LONGER BE ANY OPPOSITION REPRESENTATION IN THE STATE LEGISLATURE.)

3. PRIME MINISTER DATUK HUSSEIN ONN IN HIS CAPACITY AS NATIONAL FRONT CHAIRMAN WELCOMED REPRESENTATIVES OF THE THREE NEW NF COMPONENT PARTIES (THE NF NOW INCORPORATES 11 PARTIES) TO THE MEETING FOLLOWING COMPLETION OF THE MEMBERSHIP FORMALITIES. SNAP WAS REPRESENTED BY ITS PRESIDENT, DATUK DUNSTAN ENDAWIE, SECRETARY-GENERAL LEO MOGGIE, AND VICE PRESIDENT JOSEPH BALAN SALING. BERJAYA WAS REPRESENTED BY ITS ACTING PRESIDENT, SABAH CHIEF MINISTER DATUK HARRIS SALLEH, ACTING VICE PRESIDENT JAMES ONGKILI AND DATUK YAP PAU SZE. THE USNO CONTINGENT, HEADED BY USNO DEPUTY PRESIDENT TAN SRI SAID KERUAK, INCLUDED DATUK ZULKIFLI HAMID, DATUK ALIUDDIN DATU HARUN, DATUK ABDUL GHANI GILONG, DATUK HERMAN LUPING AND DATUK SAKARAN DANDAI. HUSSEIN ONN IS QUOTED AS REMARKING ON THIS OCCASION THAT "THE COMPONENTS (OF THE NF) SHOULD CONSOLIDATE THEIR FORCES NOT JUST TO STRENGTHEN THE ORGANIZATION BUT ALSO TO SUPPORT THE GOVERNMENT AND HELP IT OVERCOME THE PROBLEMS (IT FACES)."

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4. THE EFFECT OF THIS BROADENING OF THE NATIONAL FRONT AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL IS TO REDUCE THE OPPOSITION IN THE 154 MEMBER DEWAN RAKYAT (LOWER HOUSE OF PARLIAMENT; EQUIVALENT TO THE U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES) TO A TOTAL OF 10 (9 DEMOCRATIC ACTION PARTY (DAP) AND 1 PEKEMAS (SOCIAL JUSTICE PARTY). THIS ALSO WILL REGULARIZE POSITION IN FEDERAL GOVERNMENT OF WORKS AND UTILITIES MINISTER GHANI GILONG, WHO QUIT USNO IN MID-1975 TO JOIN FLEDGLING BERJAYA BUT IN TURN BOLTED BERJAYA TO RETURN TO USNO ON EVEN OF LAST APRIL'S STATE ELECTIONS, AND WHO TECHNICALLY SPEAKING, WAS A CABINET MINISTER "IN PRINCIPLE" ONLY* PRESENTLY OF THE 16 MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT FROM SABAH, 12 ARE AFFILIATED WITH USNO, 3 WITH SABAH CHINESE ASSOCIATION (SCA) AND 1 WITH BERJAYA. STATUS OF SCA IS UNCLEAR; HAVING LOST ALL 8 SEATS IT CONTESTED IN APRIL STATE ELECTIONS IT SUBSEQUENTLY WITHDREW FROM SABAH ALLIANCE WHICH HAD LINKED IT WITH USNO. REPORTEDLY TALKS ARE UNDERWAY AIMED AT POSSIBLE ASSOCIATING OR MERGER WITH NF COMPONENT MALAYSIAN CHINESE ASSOCIATION (MCA). UNTIL THEN SCA POSITION WILL BE AMBIGUOUS.

5. DETAILS OF HOW HERETOFORE ARCH-RIVALS BERJAYA AND USNO WILL CO-EXIST AT STATE LEVEL REMAIN TO BE WORKED OUT, AND IN PARTICULAR POSITION OF EX-CHIEF MINISTER AND SABAH POLITICAL BOSS TUN MUSTAPHA IN EQUATION IS UNCLEAR. ONE SCHOOL OF THOUGHT HOLDS THAT WITH TUN FUAD GONE FROM SCENE MUSTAPHA HAS LOST HIS KEY ANTAGONIST AND CAN WITHDRAW GRACEFULLY FROM COMPETITIVE POWER POLITICS. OTHERS HOLD THAT TUN MUSTAPHA, AN INNATE POLITICAL ANIMAL, IS ONLY BIDDING HIS TIME FOR A MAJOR PUSH TO REASSERT HIS AUTHORITY. FINALLY, THERE ARE THOSE WHO BELIEVE THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT HAS THREATENED TO PROSECUTE THE EX-CHIEF MINISTER FOR A VARIETY OF MISDEEDS AND ABUSES OF OFFICE IF HE DOESN'T MAINTAIN A LOW POLITICAL PROFILE. IN ANY CASE IT IS WIDELY HELD THAT BERJAYA IS STRONG IN CONSTITUENCIES WHERE BY-ELECTIONS ARE TO BE HELD AND HENCE USNO HAS LOST NOTHING IN CONCEDED THESE SEATS TO BERJAYA FOR OSTENSIBLE HIGHER PURPOSE OF "NATIONAL UNITY."

UNDERHILL

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